

## **State's Strategies and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities**

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Goal 1: Improve earnings, benefits and career advancement for underemployed consumers served by SBVI.

- Strategy 1.1: Work with the consumer and their family members to develop an effective employment plan that will be supported by the consumer and their natural supports.
- Strategy 1.2: Provide training to staff to ensure that we instill the message to consumers that independence is the expectation and consumers should focus on developing their abilities in order to promote themselves as desirable employees.
- Strategy 1.3: Provide additional training and refine requirements for job placement providers so that providers are better able to work with the blind and visually impaired.
- Strategy 1.4: SBVI will annually provide special employee recognition for counselors whose consumers obtain successful closures that are above SGA and/or with benefits.
- Strategy 1.5: Research and emphasize non-traditional employment opportunities such as telemarketing or computer based employment from home.
- Strategy 1.6: Increase incentives to job placement providers who place consumers in employment above SGA.
- Strategy 1.7: Develop early response procedures that address immediate needs of applicants and consumers who are employed but are in danger of losing their job.
- Strategy 1.8: Develop and/or identify training resources to ensure counselors, consumers, and employers have ready access to ADA employment regulations pertaining to reasonable accommodations for individuals with visual impairments.
- Strategy 1.9: Annually complete a mail or phone survey of consumers closed successfully 3 and 5 years ago to measure career advancements,

barriers, potential service needs, and strategies that worked for them.

Strategy 1.10: Utilize benefits specialists who have received education on SSA blindness-specific provisions to educate beneficiaries on the SSA programs that are available. This education will increase beneficiaries' confidence in making informed decisions about their benefits and will ease their concerns about re-entering the workforce.

Strategy 1.11: Review the agency referral policy to ensure that appropriate referrals are made to address counseling that cannot be provided skillfully by their vocational rehabilitation counselor.

Strategy 1.12: Utilize assessment tools and resources to match careers with consumers.

Goal 2: Increase the number of employers that are aware of vocational rehabilitation and the potential benefits of hiring individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

Strategy 2.1: SBVI will contact employers who have hired individuals with disabilities and collect testimonials from them in order to illustrate the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities.

Strategy 2.2: Counselors will distribute information employers concerning SBVI services and incentives for hiring individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Information will include targeted tax credits, OJT, and technical assistance on reasonable accommodations and assistive technology.

Strategy 2.3: Work with Department of Labor, employment agencies, career placement counselors on campuses, and participate in job fairs, etc. to provide information about the high quality candidates for employment among people with disabilities.

Strategy 2.4: Promote employment opportunities and services by sponsoring and participating in activities that attract media attention.

Strategy 2.5: Promote the capabilities of individuals who are blind or visually impaired by submitting public interest stories about successful consumers to trade organizations and media outlets within South Dakota to publish.

Strategy 2.6: Develop ongoing relationships with targeted groups of major employers in each territory.

Goal 3: Provide individuals who are blind or visually impaired and have unique needs or are underserved with specialized services so they can fully access the benefits of vocational rehabilitation services.

- Strategy 3.1: Enhance counselors' skills and abilities to work effectively with individuals who have significant disabilities with specialized training in specific areas such as deaf-blindness, mental illness, developmental disabilities, Traumatic Brain Injuries, and diabetes.
- Strategy 3.2: Agencies will actively work with cross disability organizations to educate them on the services that SBVI provides and to pursue common objectives.
- Strategy 3.3: Analyze consumer data records identify trends in secondary disability characteristics of consumers and address training for staff on service options and appropriate service delivery for the most prevalent secondary disabilities.
- Strategy 3.4: Work with individuals from minority backgrounds to recruit employees and identify barriers that prevent members of their communities from participating in SBVI programs.
- Strategy 3.5: Establish regular contacts in rural reservation areas to improve the SBVI presence in those communities and to improve service collaboration between SBVI and 121 projects.
- Strategy 3.6: Provide the agency brochure and other resources in alternative formats including the preferred language of those requesting the information.
- Strategy 3.7: Pilot a support group for individuals with vision loss on one of the major reservations.
- Strategy 3.8: Promote cultural awareness through activities at the Rehab Center that showcase the Native American culture and cultural diversity.

Goal 4: Provide staff development initiatives and division policies designed in order to ensure the most effective delivery of services to consumers.

- Strategy 4.1: Develop a process by which SBVI will enlist the input of service providers to help determine the strengths and weaknesses of SBVI programs.
- Strategy 4.2: Whenever positions are vacant, complete an internal staffing review to determine if the distribution of FTE across the state and in offices reflects current work loads and consumer needs.
- Strategy 4.3: Evaluate whether intermittent and long delays in receiving services are adversely affecting equal access and comparable outcomes for individuals living in rural communities.
- Strategy 4.4: Increase the number of training opportunities that are specifically tailored to SBVI staff.
- Strategy 4.5: Prioritize SBVI counselor activities, such as counselor staff meetings, case file reviews, and training sessions, that are designed to provide technical assistance and address counselor training needs.
- Strategy 4.6: SBVI will provide quality training to counselors in the area of job development to assist them in finding employment opportunities for consumers when suitable job developers are not available.

Goal 5: Implement strategies so that potential applicants will have improved access to information on SBVI programs and how to apply for SBVI services.

Strategy 5.1: The Division will develop public service announcements to educate the public on the services that our agency offers.

Strategy 5.2: The agency and counselors will annually conduct six in-service seminars to the public or for other entities in underserved areas to educate them on the services available to individuals with visual impairments.

Strategy 5.3: Develop the SBVI internet website to improve quality and to allow for step-by-step instructions on how to apply for services.

Strategy 5.4: Create an outreach packet for eye care professionals in order to promote SBVI services to their patients.

Strategy 5.5: SBVI Staff will conduct outreach on Native American reservations.

Strategy 5.6: Share program information with other organizations that work with people who are blind and visually impaired.

Goal 6: Provide high quality services to transition age consumers that will result in those individuals making sensible, informed decisions regarding their transition to either work or post-secondary education.

Strategy 6.1: SBVI will promote a shift focus when appropriate from obtaining a job to attaining the training required to obtain a career that matches with the consumer's potential and interests.

Strategy 6.2: Review the transition program activities and events (Summer Transition Program, Youth Leadership Forum, etc.) to see how these opportunities could be improved.

Strategy 6.3: Assist clients with making career choices based on their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, interests, and informed choice. Ensure that the consumers are fully aware of the job expectations and requirements.

Strategy 6.4: Emphasize the provision of assistive technology services and devices to transition age consumers.

Strategy 6.5: 80% of all SBVI transition student will have had some form of integrated work experience in the community before graduation from high school.

Strategy 6.6: Develop a mentoring program, scope, qualifications, recruitment etc. then connect each student within two years of graduation with a successfully employed mentor.

Goal 7: Provide SBVI consumers with high-quality rehabilitation technology services and the latest in assistive devices.

Strategy 7.1: Provide classes to consumers using updated versions of assistive technology software and devices.

Strategy 7.2: Provide guidance to ensure consumers have a plan in place before closure that will provide for needed software upgrades.

Strategy 7.3: Provide consumers with AT options to ensure that the consumers are matched with the devices and/or software that are most appropriate for their needs.